

# A Tale Of Two Fords

by GoodOl'WhatsHerName

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Summary: The year was 1970. Stanford just enrolled in Backupsmore University and just began the long journey of learning to forgive his brother. All of the students pass with their forgettable faces, but there's one student at BU that Stanford can't get out of his mind. Follow Stanford as he learns to love and trust again.

## 1. Chapter 1

\_A/N: This story takes place in 1970 with Stanford enrolled in Backupsmore University. It's mostly canon, but there might be just a few little parts that are different. I know this is a pretty short chapter, but the other ones will be longer. Everyone has to start somewhere! Also, please leave a comment if you like it. I'm also open to suggestions, so if there's something you want to happen, leave a comment and maybe I'll add it to the story! Thanks for reading!\_

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><p>English Composition wasn't exactly Stanford's favorite class. It wasn't necessarily because of the subject matter, though. He wasn't sure if it was the monotonous voice of the professor or the fact that none of the 10 students in the class seemed to be truly engaged. Stanford had only been attending Backupsmore for a week now, and he was already ready to graduate. Granted, it would only take him about half the time to get his Bachelors as it usually took since he had doubled up on classes, leaving himself very little free time. A lack of free time didn't really bother Stanford though. He spent most of his time alone anyway, and that's exactly how he liked it. He even requested that he have a single dorm rather than have a roommate.<p>

Stanford tapped his pencil lightly on his desk in a continuous beat matching the clock ticking overhead. His thoughts began to wander off as the professor continued to go over the proper use of semicolons. He began to think about what English Composition at West Coast Tech

was like. Perhaps the professor there had an interesting voice or interactive teaching style. Perhaps the students actively participated rather than sitting there with a dull, vacant look in their eyes. Perhaps he'd actually be enjoying the lesson. Perhaps he'd meet kindred spirits and make friends with other nerds like himself. Perhaps he'd find someone exactly like him. That thought made Stanford stop tapping his pencil. There was someone exactly like him, but not in the way he wanted. His twin brother Stanley. Just the thought of his brother lit a fire in the pit of Stanford's stomach. Stanley was the whole reason the he was in this dump in the first place. If Stanley hadn't gotten jealous and destroyed Stanford's project, he could be on the other side of the country learning from the best in the field. Stanley ruined his life. Stanford snapped out of his dream-like state when he accidentally snapped his pencil. He didn't even realize how hard he was gripping it. A girl with long blonde hair down to her hips, who was only sitting a few seats away, looked over in confusion, first at the pencil, then at Stanford. With an apologetic shrug, he stuffed the halved pencil into his satchel by his feet. He wasn't really taking notes anyway.

The relative stillness of the room was broken by the sound of the door shutting and quick footsteps down the stairs. The monotone voice of the professor was broken as well.

"How nice of you to decide to join us, sir." He stated condescendingly.

A short, but thin boy no older than Stanford came bounding down the stairs with more energy than the 10 students combined. The boy stopped when he realized the professor was waiting for some kind of response.

"Oh, um, I'm sorry sir," The boy stammered with a slight southern accent, "You see, the thing is, I was working on this-"

"I don't want to hear it. Just please, sit down."

The boy obeyed and the lesson continued. He was seated just a few rows in front of Stanford. The boy was digging through his bag rapidly. After a few moments, he pulled out an odd little mechanical box and a very small screwdriver. He gently sat the box on his desk and began to work on it. At this point, Stanford had almost completely forgot about the lesson. \_What on earth is that guy tinkering with?\_ Stanford thought. \_How can he just ignore the lesson and work on something else?\_

Stanford examined him. He was wearing a heavy mustard colored sweater with the collar of a baby blue button-down shirt poking out. His light colored bellbottom jeans flowed down to his slick brown loafers. He had two bandaged cuts on his right hand and an untreated one on his left. The boy's head was drooping down so he could see what he was doing better, which caused his glasses to constantly slide down his nose. His light brown, almost blond, hair was tousled like someone who has in a hurry with a few pieces sticking up in random directions. Every few minutes, he would jerk and swear under his breath while shaking his hand from a pinch or a poke.

He captivated Stanford. Out of all of the high school dropouts and middle-aged students, he stood out the most. Time seemed to fly by as Stanford continued to gaze and figure out what the boy was working

on. All of a sudden, he stopped and but his screwdriver down slowly.

\_Is he done?\_ Stanford thought. \_What's it supposed to be anyway? It looks like a useless hunk of metal.\_ He leaned forward and craned his neck to try to get a better view of the strange object. Suddenly, without warning, the tinkerer turned his head and made steady eye contact with Stanford. Startled, Stanford shot back into his seat and glued his eyes to the chalkboard, pretending that his attention was focused there the whole time.

"This will conclude class for today. Make sure to answer questions 1-27 on page 322 for tomorrow." The professor announced.

Without looking at the boy seated in front of him, Stanford clumsily shoved his notebook and textbook into his satchel. He stood up, swinging the bag over his shoulder. When he turned to leave, he almost ran into the tinkerer who decided to meet him at his seat.

"Oh! Hello, sorry, I'll just be going-" Stanford tried to shuffle past.

The boy squinted his eyes, "Stanford Pines."

His voice sent a shiver down Stanford's spine and made his face grow unbearably hot, "H-how do you know my name?"

After a few mysterious seconds, the boy burst into laughter, "It's stitched into your bag! Name's Fiddleford McGucket, but you can just call me Fids like everyone else."

Stanford reached out for a handshake, "Nice to meet you, Fids."

Fiddleford took his hand and shook it excitedly, "Likewise. It's a cigarette dispenser, by the way."

Stanford was confused, "What?"

"The thing I was working on. It's a cigarette dispenser. Here, I'll show you how it works." Fiddleford grabbed the machine out of his back and sat it on the nearest desk. He pushed a small button and a flap on the side opened, holding a lit cigarette.

"Neato!" Stanford exclaimed.

"I know, right?" Said Fiddleford. He picked up the smoldering cigarette and offered it to Stanford who politely declined. Fiddleford shrugged and took a long drag.

"So is this why you were late?"

He chuckled, "Not at all. I could show you the thing that made me late if you'd like. Maybe you could help me with it. You seem like a pretty sharp guy."

"Well I didn't graduate top of my class to be dull," Stanford laughed, "Sure, I'd love to come by."

"Groovy! I'm in room 312. Come by sometime after 4 and I'll see what you've got." He winked. And with that, he rested the cigarette in the corner of his mouth, grabbed his things and hurried out, probably late for another class.

## 2. Chapter 2

Stanford didn't have any more classes for the rest of the day, so he just decided to head back to his dorm. When he got there, he looked at the clock. It was only 2 o'clock. He still had 2 hours until he was supposed to head over to Fiddleford's. He decided to study for a while and work on his new English assignment. As the clock ticked, he got more and more nervous. \_What if Fids doesn't like me? He didn't even mention my six fingers. Maybe he didn't notice them. But then again, he did notice that I was watching him, and he noticed my name on my satchel. Oh God, he had to have noticed.\_

Stanford kept talking himself in and out of going until it was 3:55.

\_I should go, I could maybe find that friend I was looking for\_ but then again, what if he ends up thinking I'm just some strange kid and kicks me out? \_Stanford let out a deep sigh that interrupted his train of thought. \_These are the kinds of decisions Stanley would make. If Stanley was here, I know he'd want me to go.\_

Convinced by his brother's brashness, Stanford left his dorm and ascended from the first floor to the third. He stood outside of room, and rubbed the back of his neck with his thick hand. With the other, he knocked shyly. The door swung open almost instantly.

"Hey man! I was wondering if you were going to show!" Fiddleford greeted with a huge smile on his face.

"Here I am!" He smiled back awkwardly.

"Come on in man!" Fids stepped to the side motioning.

Stanford glanced around the room, getting a feel for his surroundings. The place was a mess to say the least. Random pieces of machinery and paper littered the floor. Two large beanbag chairs were in the corner with a poster for the movie \_Planet of the Apes\_ hung above it. On the opposite side of the room was a small bed with wires wrapped around the legs and a \_2001: A Space Odyssey\_ poster above it. The room wasn't too far off from what Stanford expected.

"No roommate?" He asked.

"No," said Fiddleford, "I chased him off. Too messy."

"Ah, I see. I probably would have done the same thing if I had a roommate too."

The shorter boy smiled, "So, Stanford, do you want to see what I'm working on?"

"Of course!"

Fiddleford grinned and scurried over to a pile of junk near the foot

of his bed. With a decisive tug, he pulled out a device that looked like a brief case with a screen, presenting it.

"What's this supposed to be?"

Fiddleford beamed an ornery smile, "It's a computer."

Stanford let out a long laugh, "Impossible! There is no way that you can make a working computer that small and with such little hardware!"

"That's what I'm working on! I want to shrink the average computer down to a size that you can carry around. Sure, this is just a prototype, but imagine the possibilities! One day, everyone'll have their own little personal computer!"

"You're certainly ambitious, Fids, I'll give you that."

Fiddleford began to put his project away, "Why thank you Stanford. I'll be sure to give you kudos in my autobiography about how I became a millionaire when these computers start flying off the shelves."

Stanford chuckled again, "That's if you can get them on the shelves in the first place."

"I think that getting an A on it in Mechanics is a good place to start." Fiddleford smiled, "You can sit down if you'd like. Please, make yourself at home."

Stanford nodded and took a seat in one of the lime green beanbag chairs. He sunk down slowly as the air was forced out and the chair formed to the curves of his body. It wasn't until now that Stanford noticed the strong earthy scent that seemed to coat everything in the room with a thin layer. He expected much worse, given the tendency of young, single men to avoid cleanliness, but Fiddleford's dorm was different. It was also now that he noticed that none of the things in Fids' room were necessarily dirty, just disorganized.

"Would you like a Coke?" Fiddleford asked, swinging open the door to a small refrigerator resting on the ground.

"Sure, a coke would be delightful."

Stanford watched as Fids bent over to fetch two bottles and effortlessly popped the caps off on the edge of the fridge. He walked over, handed Stanford his drink, and sat down in the other beanbag chair.

"So, Stanford, tell me a little bit about yourself. What's your major?"

Stanford took a quick sip of his soda, "Well, I'm planning on double majoring in Science and Mathematics and minoring in Technology. With the way I've got my courses set up, I should be able to graduate a few years ahead of time."

Fiddleford let out a long, impressed whistle, "Golly, you sure have everything planned out. I'm not even sure what classes I'm taking next semester. I just sort of go with the flow. I just let destiny

take me wherever it decides." He crossed his legs and took a big gulp of his own drink.

"That's alright," Stanford reassured, "It's outrageous for adults to expect us to know what we want to do for the rest of our lives, especially at this age. I suppose I'm a bit of an exception. I've been working towards this since I was about 12."

Fiddleford chuckled, "We're pretty similar in that aspect. I've been building and blueprinting for as long as I can remember. My parents told me that when I was just a toddler, I was always fiddling with something. I can't tell if they named me Fiddleford because they knew I'd fiddle with things, or if it was a self-fulfilling prophecy." He sat and thought for a moment, "Or maybe they just wanted me to play the fiddle" oh well, joke's on them because I play the banjo!"

Both of the boys laughed. Stanford was much more comfortable now. He couldn't even remember why he was nervous to come over in the first place.

"Hmm, Stanford," Fids sighed, "That sounds so formal. Do you have any nicknames I could call you?"

"Yes, but most of them aren't very nice" "

"Well what about Stan?" Fids suggested.

"Well, actually, that's what my brother-" Stanford cut himself off, not wanting to bring up the sore topic, "Uh, people just usually call me Ford."

"I like it," Fids nodded, "Ford. Like Henry Ford. You're destined for greatness with a name like that!" He hoisted up his bottle.

"I sure hope so, for my sake at least." Ford smiled.

The two boys talked for what seemed like hours. They discussed things like politics, extraterrestrial life forms, war, peace, and microeconomics. Ford had nearly exhausted his knowledge on architecture, but Fids continued to rattle off the dimensions of the Pyramids of Giza and the different ways they could have been constructed (including alien intervention). It wasn't till several cokes and topic changes later that they started talking about more personal things.

"-And I suppose that's why I was never allowed to use the toaster," Fids said, finishing a long story, "But I guess that my mom has always been like that. You'd do anything for family."

"Yeah" Ford trailed off, staring absentmindedly at the third empty bottle in his hands. He would have done anything for family, but apparently Stanley didn't think the same way. Ford planned on not talking to Stan ever again, and the realization of this just came back to his mind. He was getting ready to come up with an excuse for leaving.

Fids sensed that something was off, "Hey," He placed a gentle hand on Ford's shoulder, "are you ok, Stanford?"

The warmth and comfort from Fiddleford's gesture made Ford feel worse for leaving, "Yeah, it's just getting kind of late is all."

He looked up at the clock, "It's only 8:45, the sun only just set."

"Yeah, well, I have to get up early for this test and I still need to study for it. I also have this other assignment for Chemistry due tomorrow and it's a nightmare." Ford rambled while standing up.

Fids stood up too, "Oh, well hey, that's alright man, I understand. You can't graduate early by slacking." He added, trying to lessen the tension.

"I suppose you can't. Thank you for having me over. And sorry I polished off the last of your cokes."

"Don't be sorry. It's nice having company for once," He admitted.

Ford gave a halfhearted smile, "I should probably get going." He opened the door and started to leave, but he was stopped with another warm touch on the shoulder.

"Hey," Fids grabbed his attention, "If you ever want to study or hang or just need someone to talk to, don't be a stranger. You're more than welcome here."

Ford nodded, "Thank you."

The door shut gently and Ford trudged down the two flights of stairs back to his room. It wasn't until he sat down at his desk that he realized that the empty coke bottle was still in his hand. He sat it towards the back of his desk so he wouldn't accidentally knock it off. He made a mental note to take it to a recycling bin in the morning on his way to class. Ford kicked off his shoes and undressed so that he was only in his briefs. He slipped into bed and tried to drift off to sleep, avoiding any thoughts of his brother and his anger towards him. With the lights shut off, there was still some remaining twilight illuminating the room. Ford stared at the shadows on the ceiling. He wasn't tired at all. It wasn't until much later that he was able to fall asleep and forget about his brother and just think about his new acquaintance Fiddleford. Maybe Fiddleford was actually his new friend. He never did remember to recycle his empty coke bottle.

### 3. Chapter 3

\_A/N: Thanks for reading and thanks for all of the comments!\_

\* \* \*

><p>The bleating of Stanford's alarm clock pierced the silence of the room. With his eyes still closed, he reached around his nightstand until he found the off button and his glasses. He sat up and swung his legs over the edge of the bed, rubbing his eyes. With a yawn and a stretch, Ford was able to get up. He didn't sleep well last night, but then again, he hadn't sleep well for the past week. He put on a clean pair of charcoal colored pants and a mint green button-down.

Once dressed, he made his way to the communal bathroom that was shared by all of the men on that level of the building. He sat his bag of toiletries next to one of the sinks and examined himself in the mirror. He looked tired and worn. He pulled out a comb and tried to tame his messy brown hair, but eventually gave up and left it. While brushing his teeth, he noticed that he was the only one in the bathroom. Sure, 6:00 was kind of early, but he had chapters to read, assignments to do, and his first class started at 8:00. Clearly no one else was quite as ambitious as him.<p>

Stanford walked across the green campus, munching on an apple, which was his breakfast. He saw the dean a ways up the sidewalk with two formally dressed women holding clipboards. Although they were out of earshot, he was certain that the dean was giving his classic "mostly bug-free dorms" speech. It was then that Ford tripped on something lying across the sidewalk. He stumbled, but caught himself, and spun around to figure out what on Earth had tripped him. What appeared to be a stretched out tape measure was leading from the dormitories on one side, and through a small wooded area on the other. If there was one thing Stanford had for sure, it was a crippling curiosity. He just had to know what was on the other end, so he decided to follow it through the thicket of trees. He followed the yellow tape into a small clearing and was amazed at what he saw. In the center of the clearing was a tall wooden structure, a few feet taller than him. It took him a mere second to realize that it was a catapult. What amazed him the most, though, was Fiddleford standing next to it writing furiously on his clipboard.

"What in the world are you doing?" Stanford asked, staring at the contraption.

Fiddleford looked up from his notes and nearly squealed with joy, "Ford! I'm so glad you're here! I was just about to go and fetch you, here," He tossed a pair of goggles in Ford's direction, "safety first!"

"Is this a catapult?" He asked, putting on the goggles.

"Sure is! I've been working on it for a few days now. I'm just finishing up some final calculations. The trajectory has to be just right." Fids beamed.

Ford walked up and touched one of the beams supporting it. He gave it a bit of a shove and found it to be very sturdy, "This is excellent craftsmanship. Is it made out of maple?"

"Pine, actually," Fids winked. He held up the end of his tape measure and pressed a button. The line came reeling in rapidly, and finished with a loud snap, "I'm getting ready to fire it, and I was hoping you'd like to stick around and watch."

Ford looked back up at the contraption, "Trust me, I'd really like to, but I'm going to be late for Chemistry."

"So am I, but that's never stopped me before." He shrugged.

"Wait, you're in my Chemistry class? I've never seen you in there before."

"Exactly, I'm always late!" Fids approached Ford, "I get up at 6



everyday and work on different things. The past couple of days, it's been this," He motioned to the catapult, "I've worked so hard on it, it's be a shame if its first launch didn't have an audience."

Ford tried to hide a smile, "Ok, fine, you've convinced me! Mostly because I really want to see this behemoth in action." He patted the pine supports.

"Yes!" Fids exclaimed, giving Ford a quick celebratory hug.

Ford's heart skipped a beat when Fiddleford's arms wrapped around him tightly. He was much stronger than he seemed.

"Here," Fids shoved his clipboard into Ford's hands, "you can go ahead at double check my math while I get everything ready."

Fids scampered over and began to crank the catapult, pulling back the basket into proper firing position. Ford squinted at the scribbles on the paper, "Your hand writing is kind of hard to readâ€¦ is that a 6 or a 5?" He called.

Fiddleford walked back over to check, "Hmâ€¦ that's probably a 6."

Ford shrugged, "If you say so. Everything looks to be in order here," He looked at the catapult and noticed that the basket was filled with dozens of colored balloons and pointed towards the dormitories, "Do you need help turning it around?"

Fids looked confused, "Why would I turn it around?"

"Because it's pointing right at the college," Ford paused, letting it sink in, "What are you planning to do with this exactly, Fids?"

"Well, there's this guy, Franklin Spitz. Last year, he stole my schematics for my final in Carpentry. His dorm is on the 4th floor and he always leaved his window open, so I figured I'd send him a little "thank you" for stealing my A+ grade."

"Do you mean to tell me that you're using this the get revenge?" Ford interrogated.

Fids avoided eye contact, "Well, I wouldn't necessarily call it "revenge" per say, I'm just teaching him a lesson."

"That's what revenge means, Fids."

"Eh, tomato tomato," Fiddleford shrugged. He noticed the look of disapproval he was receiving, "C'mon Ford, don't pretend that there hasn't been someone in your life that's taken advantage of you and deserves some payback."

Ford's mind instantly went to his childhood bully, Crampelter.

"Just think about it," Fids continued, "this might be your only chance to make someone pay for their actions."

After a brief moment of thought, Ford finally gave in, "Alright, you got me, let's make this bully pay."

"Alright!" Fids lowered his goggles from the top of his head over the spectacles already perched on his nose. He hurried over to the release lever and prepared himself, "Firing in 3, 2, 1!"

With a firm tug, Fiddleford pulled the lever, making the catapult fire rather quickly, sending a barrage of balloons over the canopy of trees. He ran in the direction of his attack, motioning for Ford to follow him. The two quickly navigated through the thicket and poked their heads out to see the damage. Ford looked for the window Fiddleford was talking about, but it didn't look like a dorm that had just been pelted with water balloons. His gaze slowly drifted down until he saw what they had hit and froze. The dean was standing on the dirt path below the target, dripping wet. Fiddleford snatched the clipboard from Ford's hands and examined it closely.

"Yep," he nodded solemnly, "That's definitely a 5, not a 6."

The dean's face turned a shade of red that Stanford had only seen one other time, and that was when his father had dropped a heavy box on his foot.

"I think we should probably get going," Ford declared, grabbing Fiddleford's hand urgently, "Let's go!"

Ford took off, practically dragging an awestruck Fiddleford behind him. The two ran away from the scene of the crime, but stayed just inside the edge of the woods as to not be seen. Ford was scared out of his mind about what would happen to them. He could hear faint shouting as he picked up the pace, ducking and weaving around various trees and bushes. He could hear the shouting right on his tail like they were being followed. Ford gripped Fid's hand tighter and kept running as his lungs started to burn. He could finally make out the shouting that came from behind him and realized that it came from Fiddleford.

"Whoa! Ford! Slow down! It's ok, he's not following us! Ford! Stop!"

Ford stopped nearly immediately, but Fids didn't. The shorter boy crashed into him, sending the both of them toppling over. Fiddleford's weight landed right on Stanford's chest, and a knee managed to land on his groin.

Ford let out a yelp of pain, "Fuck!"

Fiddleford was dazed from the crashed. As soon as he realized where his knee had landed, he rolled off of Ford, "I'm sorry! I didn't mean to run into you, I didn't expect you to stop like that."

Ford held the pained area and took deep breaths, "It's ok," He groaned, "It's not your fault. I just wish I had a cup for protection rather than these useless goggles."

Both of them lay there on their backs, staring up at the canopy above them, trying to catch their breath. It had taken a few minutes until Fiddleford broke the silence with a chuckle, "Did you see the dean's face?"

Ford couldn't help but laugh too, "His face was as red as a

tomato!"

They both burst into laughter, not even worried about being discovered.

Ford let out a hearty sigh, "At least it was just water."

Fiddleford cleared his throat, "Yeah, um, about thatâ€¦"

Ford turned on his side and propped himself up on one elbow, looking at Fiddleford inquisitively.

He avoided eye contact, looking everywhere except at Ford, "I might've sort ofâ€¦ accidentallyâ€¦ unintentionallyâ€¦"

"Fiddleford, what did you put in those balloons?" He was sterner this time.

"Vinegar." He finally admitted.

"Vinegar balloons? At the dean? Dear God, I'm going to get expelled." Ford exclaimed.

"Well it's not like I was aiming for the dean! My calculations were just slightly off." Fids said in his defense, "And besides, you're the supposed math wiz that checked it. That makes you an accomplice."

Ford sat up and took off the goggles with one hand and rubbed his eyes under his glasses with the other. Fids sat up beside him. He reached over and started rubbing in small circles on the taller boy's back, sending foreign shivers up Ford's spine. He wasn't used to such gentle human contact, and usually avoided it. But this was different; Fiddleford actually soothed him and made his muscles relax.

"Hey, look, I'm sorry I dragged you into this, man," Fids removed his hand, leaving Ford with an almost empty feeling, "When they find out it was me, I won't mention your name. This was all my idea anyway."

Ford turned to him and nodded as to say "thank you".

Fids looked him up and down, his eyes catching on Ford's lips just long enough to be noticeable, "We should probably get to Chemistry," He reached up and removed a twig from Stanford's now disheveled hair, "Besides, we need an alibi," He winked.

Fiddleford helped him to his feet and the two both cautiously snuck their way to class, hoping not to see the dean on their way over. They tried to also sneak into their Chemistry class, but the door was much too squeaky to go unnoticed. Their professor stopped writing, mid formula, to see who had walked in.

"Mr. McGucket, late to my class, as expected. But Mr. Pines, I thought you were a better student than this." The professor announced with her hands on her hips.

Stanford started to say some kind of excuse, but Fiddleford cut him off, "I'm sorry, Ms. Jacobs. Stanford is a better student than this. It's my fault we're late. We were just, uh, going on a walk. Through

the woods. And we, uh, got sort of lost."

Stanford glanced between the professor, Fiddleford, and all of the students watching. He caught glimpse of a rather noticeable twig caught in Fid's hair. Ford grabbed it in one swift motion, eliciting giggles from around the classroom.

The professor didn't seem too convinced, "Very well. Just make sure you take your next walk after my class," The two boys nodded and started to head to their seats, "And Mr. Pines," Ford perked up, "If I were you, I'd be sure to not pick up bad habits from certain students."

They sat down next to each other and Ms. Jacobs continued her lecture. Ford tried to pay attention, but noticed a few heads turned around looking back at them. Some students were whispering to each other and some were giggling. Instinctively, Ford hid his abnormal hands under his desk, but then realized that wasn't what they were laughing at. It was then that he finally put it all together. Coming in late with a clearly made up excuse, messy hair, disheveled clothes, grass stains, twigs in their hair; it was all more than suggestive of a romp in the woods. Ford could feel his face heat up from embarrassment. He looked at the disheveled Fiddleford, leaning back with his hands clasped behind his head and a satisfied smile on his face that almost made their "romp in the woods" seem believable. Ford shook his head, and then buried his face in his arms folded on the desk. It was almost too believable.

#### 4. Chapter 4

The day started with the smell of stale coffee and a rude awakening. Ford had been at Backupsmore for a little over two months now, and every night he succeeded in going above and beyond. Ford had the habit of staying up reading and studying until the sun started to come up. He also had the habit of skipping meals whenever he was completely engrossed in a project, dedicating as much of his time as he could to his studies. Ford dreamed about parabolas and quadratics, unable to really concentrate on anything else. His bed had become more of a bookshelf, his desk more like a bed, and his textbooks more like pillows. He often times would wake up with a pencil still firmly held in his hand and an unfinished equation punched into his waiting calculator. This morning wasn't much different from any other. The same ear-piercing alarm jolted him awake as if he had just received a thousand volts. He shot up in his chair with a piece of paper stuck to his cheek and his glasses askew. He felt as though there were sandbags tied to his eyelids, making it difficult to hold them open. The only thing keeping him conscious was the berating alarm clock. Ford plucked the stray paper from his face and straightened his spectacles. After a few minutes of fading in and out of consciousness, Ford finally gained the strength to stand and walk to his alarm on the other side of the room. It would be much easier for him to keep his clock on his desk where he could reach it, but Ford knew from past experience the he would just hit snooze repeatedly and miss class. He had given up on waking up at 6:00 every morning, considering he usually passed out around 5:00. If he skipped breakfast, he could wake up at 7:30 and still make it to class on time. Ford gathered the two empty coffee cups from his desk and tossed them into the growing heap of cups in his trashcan. He stretched his arms above his head, letting out a groan, and lowered

himself back into his desk chair. Just as his rear was making contact with the seat, there was a loud knocking at his door. Ford groaned louder this time as he dragged himself to the door. He had only managed to turn the knob with a limp, sleepy hand when the person of this other side barged in.

"Mornin Sleeping Beauty!" Fiddleford greeted, strolling into the dim room.

Ford mumbled something incoherently as he slowly closed the door.

Fiddleford put his hands on his hips and shook his head, "Jesus, Ford. When did you go to bed last night?"

"After the sun started to come up." Ford slurred, rubbing his bloodshot eyes.

"You can't keep doing this, man," Fiddleford scolded, "you really need to take care of yourself."

Ford waved away the suggestion and yawned, "I'm fine Fids, don't worry about me."

"Don't worry about you?" Fids walked over to the window in a huff and yanked up the blinds. The flash of light burned Ford's eyes and made him wince.

"You're practically a zombie, Ford. You've got more bags under your eyes than Audrey Hepburn has in her closet," Fiddleford looked him up and down, "didn't you wear that yesterday?"

Ford looked at down at his outfit, "And the day before that, I think. But never mind that, I'm a busy man. I don't have time for things like picking out outfits. "

Fiddleford just shook his head again, "You have a 4.2 GPA, so why do you keep doing this to yourself?"

"Look, Fids, you justâ€¦ you don't understand," Said Ford, starting to get irritated, "My GPA could be 4.3, 4.7, or fucking 400. Regardless, I would still work just as hard because I know I can do better and I need to do better. What's the point of furthering my education if I don't push myself as far as you'll go?"

"What's the point of living if we all die?" Fiddleford countered. He gave Ford a moment to think, and then continued, "The point is to enjoy life. You can't enjoy life if all you're doing is cramming your mind with information 24/7, and then spewing it back onto a piece of paper. You need to get out and experience life for what it is. Live a little. Grades are merely numbers and letters on a sheet of paper that you'll forget about in ten years time, but experiences and memories stick with you forever. No one can take those away from you."

Ford became defensive, "No one can take away your knowledge either. If I ever am outside and get bit by a snake, I'd be grateful for memorizing the 22 species of snake in New Jersey and whether or not the one that bit me is venomous; stopping to smell the roses definitely wouldn't save my life. I'm making the most of my time and

money. I'm ensuring future financial security and knowledge to pass on to future generations."

"Knowledge is by no means a bad thing, Stanford; that's not what I'm getting at. What I'm saying is that you're going to kill yourself if you keep doing this! Take a break, go for a walk, go to the theatre, really anything would be better than sitting inside for weeks on end. Hell, when was the last time you even ate anything?" Fids was almost shouting at this point.

Stanford stood there silently for a moment. He noticed how upset this was making Fiddleford., but he couldn't understand why he was so angry. It was Ford's body, so why should he care what he does with it?

Fiddleford took a deep breath and composed himself, "Justâ€¦ just wait here." He shuffled past the zombie of a man and out the door.

Ford stood there, unsure of what to do about Fids blowing up on him like that. The room felt empty and much too quiet. He looked at himself in a tiny circular mirror hanging on the wall. His hair was matted on one side, and incredibly poofy on the other, and it almost looked as though he had two black eyes. He hadn't shaved in the past couple of days, and his beard grew slightly unevenly. There was a small coffee stain near the collar of his wrinkled sweater. It wasn't until he looked down at his hands that he realized he was still clutching his pencil from note taking late last night. Ford threw it at his desk and slammed his textbook shut out of frustration. He suddenly felt a strong urge to shower, shave, and put on clean clothes. He wasn't entirely sure when or if Fiddleford would come back, so he decided to take a quick shower in the communal bathroom. He grabbed his towel, clothes, and toiletries and hurried down the hallway, dodging other well-groomed students. After he returned to his room, he was relieved that he didn't miss Fiddleford's return. Ford felt much better; much more like a human being. His hair was now combed through nicely, his face clean-shaven, (he only nicked himself once on the chin) and a new blue shirt with a brown vest. Ford was in the middle of making his bed when the door creaked open. Fiddleford entered with a small paper sack in hand. When he looked up, he was stupefied by Ford's appearance. His lips curved into a smile as he shut the door, unable to take his eyes off of Stanford.

"You clean up really nice," Fids commented. His demeanor suddenly changed and he seemed ashamed, "I'm sorry for dumping on you like that, Ford. That was uncalled for on my part."

"No, don't apologize," Ford stepped closer to the other boy, "You're right, this isn't good for me. I need to take a break from studying every once in a whileâ€¦ and shower."

They both chuckled at that and shared a comfortable silence.

"So," Ford said, breaking the silence, "What's in the bag?"

Fiddleford snapped out of an almost dream like phase, "Oh, yeah! I almost forgot," He sat the sack on the edge of the messy desk and fished out a muffin wrapped in plastic wrap, a banana, an apple, and several slices of toast in a plastic baggie, "Breakfast."

Ford didn't realize how hungry he was until he took the first bite. Fiddleford just watched on, smiling, as Ford scarfed down his food in the most polite way possible. When he finished off the last of his breakfast, Ford looked at his clock and noticed that his first class of the morning had started 2 minutes ago.

"Oh shit! I'm late!" Ford sprang up from his seat and grabbed a textbook and random papers. He shoved them into his satchel as papers flew around the room from all of the commotion, "Thanks so much for the meal Fids, but I've got a test today and I was cramming all night, so I have to take it before I forget everything. Thanks again!"

He threw an arm around the other boy for a quick, thankful hug before he practically sprinted out the door. Papers, still in free-fall, settled to the ground like a blanket of snow. Fiddleford noticed that Ford had left in such a hurry that he had forgotten his shoes next to the bed. Fids chuckled to himself and laid back on Ford's bed\_. Baby steps\_, he thought, \_baby steps\_.

End  
file.